DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 781 CG 009 655

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TITLE Agency Directionality and Staff Individuality.
INSTITUTION Colorado State Univ., Ft. Collins. Univ. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 28p.; Student Development Series, Vol5 No1

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Agency Role; *Counseling Services; Counselor Role; Institutional Role; *Personnel Evaluation; *Professional Personnel; Program Development; Psychologists; *Staff Role

ABSTRACT

Psychologists who choose work as members of counseling agencies are likely to experience some dissonance between what their individual interests and skills would have them do professionally and what they are asked to do as a staff member of the agency. Conversely, as a component of a larger institution or community, an agency's very existence may depend upon the congruence between its service program and the goals of the parent institution. A service program based exclusively on the interests and skills of individual staff members is not likely to produce a proactive center striving to attain its predetermined goals. There is also the danger, however, that exclusive attention to agency directionality will either stifle individual creativity and innovation or result in objectives which may not be congruent with institutional goals. Ideally a balance between the two will exist, but that is not likely to occur by change. This paper describes a systematic procedure designed to protect staff individuality and provide for agency intentional directionality in accordance with institutional goals. (Author)

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STUdENT DEVELOPMEnT SERiES

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

CG 009 655

The Student Development Series is published by the University Counseling Center, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80521. It is directed to the interest of counselors, psychologists, and other student development professionals as well as administrators, faculty and students in higher education. Contributions to the Series are made by members of the Colorado State University community. The Series include Student Development Reports, which are reports of a research or program evaluation nature, and Student Development Staff Papers, which relate to theoretical or philosophical issues. A listing of prior Reports and Staff Papers is presented at the conclusion of this issue.

The cover depicts man's striving toward unity of personality, represented by the magic circle, or mandala.

ED103781

AGENCY DIRECTIONALITY AND STAFF INDIVIDUALITY

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Student Development Staff Papers

Vol V, No. 1, 1974-75

Abstract

Psychologists who choose to work as members of counseling agencies are likely to experience some dissonance between what their individual interests and skills would have them do professionally and what they are asked to do as a staff member of the agency. Conversely, as a component of a larger institution or community, an agency's very existence may depend upon the congruence between its service program and the goals of the parent institution. A service program based exclusively on the interests and skills of individual staff members is not likely to produce a proactive center striving to attain its predetermined goals. There is also the danger, however, that exclusive attention to agency directionality will either stifle individual creativity and innovation or result in objectives which may not be congruent with institutional goals. Ideally a balance between the two will exist, but that is not likely to occur by chance. This paper describes a systematic procedure designed to protect staff individuality and provide for agency intentional directionality in accordance with institutional goals.

Agency Intentional Directionality and Staff Individuality

A psychologist or counselor who chooses to work as a member of a counseling or mental health agency sooner or later experiences some dissonance between what his/her individual interests and skills would have him/her do professionally and what he/she is asked to do as one staff member of an agency serving a clientele. This conflict is compounded when the agency is part of a larger institution, as in the case of a counseling service in a college or university setting. It is difficult to say, in the absence of data, how these conflicts are most commonly resolved. However, the fact that one of the common criticisms of counseling agencies by parent institutions is that of insensitivity to the needs of the institution and "counselors being off doing their own thing" suggests that the resolution is frequently in the direction of the staff member's individual interests prevailing.

Kelly (1974), after a tour of college and university counseling centers across the country, reported nine characteristics that appear to distinguish those agencies that are healthy, growing, and vital from those agencies in trouble with their parent institutions. One of the distinguishing characteristics was that those agencies involved in a careful assessment of the needs of their parent institutions through surveying students, faculty, and administration appear to be in much better general health than those agencies dictating their own programs apart from the assessment of institutional needs. Another distinguishing characteristic was that those agencies having built a comprehensive system of services based on needs assessment were in much better health than agencies who had neglected this. Kelly also observed that those agencies communicating their system of services to their clientele, reporting evaluations of their services, and involved in studies of accountability to both clientele and parent institutions were experiencing much better success than those agencies not involved in these types of activities. Implicit in these observations is collective intentional directionality as opposed to agency divergence based on the pursuit of individual interests or skills.

A second quandary sooner or later faced by staff members of counseling agencies is that of seemingly endless requests for varied services by the parent institution or the clientele being served. Efforts to respond immediately to these requests often have a divisive and divergent impact on an agency. Not only are individual resources diffused, but staff members often begin feeling over-extended, over-worked, and distracted from the more superordinate objectives of the agency. In such a circumstance it becomes difficult if not impossible to identify and pursue agency priorities. Furthermore, individual priorities are overwhelmed by requests for immediate attention to these "crises." The result is that individual and agency resources are consumed by immediate demands with little or no resource left for investment in more long range goals and directions.

These Agency/Individual interactions are further complicated by the American taxpayers' disenchantment with higher education during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Evidence of this is found in the number of smaller private institutions forced to close their doors, decreasing proportions of financial allotment to public institutions, and a job market that no longer guarantees the college graduate a job upon completion of a degree. This circumstance has been felt throughout higher education and more specifically in college and university counseling centers through reduction in staff, budget, or, in some cases, a complete elimination of services. Within this context, counseling agencies no longer have the luxury of ignoring intentional directionality that is congruent with parent institution goals and objectives. Yet, this agency directionality must not stifle the valuable and innovative contributions which emerge in a climate of freedom to pursue individual interests and inclinations.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a procedure whereby agency vitality is enhanced through intentional directionality, and yet staff individuality with all its inherent potential is protected and maintained. The ten-step sequence described below is a conceptualization designed to achieve both. This process

came out of the work of the authors and the staff in the University Counseling Center at Colorado State University, and is most applicable to other college counseling centers. The basic concept, however, has applicability to a wide variety of counseling and human service agencies contributing to the achievement of institutional and community goals or objectives.

Step 1: Identify and/or define institutional goals.

Professionals have a tendency to forget their link with the larger institution and the institutional goals. This first Step is designed to both acknowledge and emphasize to agency staff and to institutional and community citizens alike this interdependence. Unfortunately, institutional goals are often stated in nebulous and non-specific terms. Neither can it be assumed that the goal statements always reflect careful and incisive thought. The American Council on Education (1971) developed a four variable conceptualization of the higher educational process that is useful in placing statements of institutional goals into a proper perspective.

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(Insert Figure I about here)

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This conceptualization is abstract enough to apply to all institutions of higher education and yet specific enough to provide added meaning to most goal statements of colleges and universities. Figure I displays the four variables as being: (1) the student input variable which consists of all of the characteristics, attributes, hope aspirations, etc., that students possess as they enter into the university system; (2) the environmental variable reflects the total environment-physical, social and academic-that the student enters when matriculating at a university; (3) the interaction between all of these student variables and environmental variables; and, (4) the student output variable which consists of how the student is different when he/she leaves the university. This ACE conceptualization is helpful in deriving agency objectives that are relevant to institutional goals.

Step 2: Derive agency objectives from institutional goals statements.

After the institutional goals have been identified, the counseling agency's contribution to those goals may be derived. Morrill and Hurst (1971) proposed a preventive-developmental role for a counseling agency that is one example of how an agency may derive its objectives from the broader statement of institutional goals. Their statements of objectives are:

1. To provide students with those skills, attitudes, and resources prerequisite to maximum utilization of and success in the learning environment.

2. To contribute to, modify, and enhance the university environment according to established principles of learning and human development.

3. To acquire information about students, their environment, and their interaction in order to provide a data base for relevant programming to achieve objectives (1) and (2) above.

The first statement is an objective derived from variable number 1 of the ACE conceptualization. Statement number 2 has been derived from variable number 2, with the third statement relating to variable number 3 and being inclusive of variables 1 and 2 of the ACE conceptualization.

Objective statement number 3 above is especially important in its recognition of the importance of assessing unique institutional needs and building programs based on those needs. The significance of this is that needs and expectations vary from institution to institution and also across time in the same institution. Thus, specific agency goals will not be static, but will vary as the needs of the institution vary.

Step 3: Compile agency resources.

This step is designed to identify both the financial and staff hour resources available for investment into agency statements of objectives. Each individual staff member and the hours per week that each one has committed to the agency are

listed and the total number of hours for the agency then tabulated from the individual totals. Whereas the dollar resources available are obviously important, much has been written about allocation of dollar resources and it is the intention of this paper to emphasize the allocation of staff resources.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

(Insert Figure 2 about here)

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

It is only after the agency resources have been identified and organized that investments in goal attainment can systematically occur. (Note "total hours" column in Figure 2).

Step 4: Derive agency activities and programs from agency objectives.

The activities and programs derived from agency objectives are as distinct as each institution is distinct. The activities or programs should also take into consideration the unique capabilities of staff members with regard to intervention strategies. Figure 2 contains the seven categories of activities and programs that the Colorado State University Counseling Center derived from its statement of objectives. The personal development category includes the traditional intervention modes of individual and group counseling, as well as those program efforts which have been developed and researched to the extent that they can be packaged either in total or in modular components and delivered with the assistance of paraprofessionals to the general clientele of the agency. Examples of some of these programs are: Career Development groups, Communication Skills Workshops, Life Planning Workshops, and Student Couples Seminars. The consultation-training mode encompasses all efforts to interact with the larger institution or community and impact that environment. This usually includes work with faculty members, administrative staff, other segments of student personnel services, student groups, academic departments, etc.

Research and Evaluation as a component in Figure 2 includes not only evaluating the effectiveness of service programs as they are offered, but also continually assessing the students, their environment and the interaction between the two. The staff development component encompasses inservice training as well as the training and supervision of interns, practicum students, and new staff members. The Testing Service includes all of the traditional testing functions included in the counseling process along with faculty test scoring and test construction consultation and national and institutional testing programs. General administration includes those functions necessary in administering the overall affairs of the agency. Finally, the staff professional growth component encompasses those activities of individual staff members designed to enhance their professional competence as staff members of the agency. It is a time that can be utilized for reading, thinking, planning, writing, attending workshops, etc.

The Personal Development component relates directly to objective number 1, (to teach students those skills prerequisite to success), Consultation-Training relates primarily to objective number 2, (to modify the environment), and Research and Evaluation relates to objective number 3, (to gather data about students, environment, and their interaction). Testing, staff development, general administration and personal growth are superordinate activities relating to all three objectives.

Step 5: Determine the proportion of agency resources to be allotted to each intervention mode.

This step is one of the most crucial in the identification and adoption of agency directionality. This "allocation of resources" step must provide an opportunity for the total staff to have input. A staff retreat or workshop in which consideration is given to the previous steps leading to this one plus the contribution the staff, as an agency, would most like to make to the institutional

community must be considered. Recognition of the institution's expectation of the agency is also an essential part of this step. The initial allocations by a staff should be perceived as flexible with the awareness that this can be changed periodically during the year. In an academic environment, quarterly or semester time frames work well for re-evaluations of the resource allocations. Reference to Figure 2 reveals that during that particular quarter, personal development was allocated 41%, consultation-training 12%, research and evaluation 8%, staff development 12%, testing 4%, administration 13%, and professional growth 10% of the agency resources.

The fact that all staff members are involved in the determination of these resource allocations implies a staff-wide commitment to the agency approximation of these allocations. It is important to note that the proportion of time allocated in each intervention mode need not be approximated by each individual staff member. One staff member may devote practically all of his/her time to personal development while another would do the same for consultation and still not violate the intentional directionality of the agency as long as they counterbalance each other.

Step 6: Individual staff members determine their own proposed allocation of personal resources into each intervention mode and describe specific task to be accomplished.

With Step 6 the staff individuality component of this procedure emerges. This step is completed by each staff member determining the number of hours per week (based on a 40-hour week) for which he/she is responsible to the agency. Next, the staff member distributes this time across the intervention modes of the agency in an "ideal" distribution as though he/she were to have total determination over the allocation of his/her time distribution during a typical week.

The second part of this step entails the staff member indicating the task or tasks that are to be accomplished in the time specified. The importance of this second part lies in its approximation to a "management by objectives" approach. It is through specifying the task or tasks to be accomplished that at the end of the specified period of time an evaluation can occur. If only the number of hours committed are dealt with, some process evaluation can occur, but through designating the specific task to be accomplished, outcome evaluation is made possible.

Step 7: Individual and agency negotiate the time allotments and tasks.

With steps 1 through 6 completed, the stage is set for a negotiation process designed on the one hand to actualize the agency directionality as determined in step 5, and yet protect insofar as possible the "ideal" individual proposal or "contract" that each staff member is proposing. Procedurally, the most effective approach to completing this step appears to be placing on a large blackboard the chart that is portrayed in Figure 2 without the individual staff members' hour distribution listed. During a specified period of time (perhaps a specified day) staff members are instructed to enter their "ideal" time distribution in the format on the blackboard. After each staff member has completed this, the entire staff meets. The columns are totaled and percentages of resource allocations computed for each intervention mode. The result of this is then compared to the "ideal" resource allocations determined in step 5 above. At this point the entire staff enters into negotiations in order to most closely approximate the agency directionality as determined in step 5. Specifically, it usually entails individual staff members being willing to modify their "ideal" contracts in the direction of approximating agency-wide intentions. Experience with this system has taught that if each staff member has a willingness to compromise a little, the discrepancies can be quickly eliminated. At the conclusion of this meeting the entire staff is not only aware of where everyone else is investing time, and what each person

intends to accomplish, but is aware as well of the direction the agency is moving in its effort to contribute to the more broad goals of the institution or community.

Step 8: Write, finalize and sign individual contracts.

After the negotiation process of step 7 has been completed, each staff member is prepared to finalize an individual contract with the agency. This is accomplished by having each staff member complete the Contract and Performance Evaluation Form (CPEF) reproduced in Figure 3. In filling out this form, the staff member indicates not only the proportion of time being allocated to each intervention mode and professional activity, but also the tasks to be accomplished within each area.

Figure 3 shows that each staff member's contract is divided into seven categories corresponding to those outlined in Figure 2. To the left of each category, a numerical weighting is noted which indicates the degree of emphasis that a staff member would like to place on that area. The weightings consist of dividing ten performance factor points across the seven categories. For example, a staff member may decide to place considerable emphasis in the Personal Development area and assign it a weight of 6.0 while weighting another area such as Staff Development only 2.0. It should be obvious that not all categories must receive emphasis in any one contractual period. Although these weightings often closely coincide with the percentage of time spent in each area, this would not be necessary and could vary considerably. The completed CPEF is essentially a contract between the individual and the other members of the staff specifying the tasks which need to be done in order to ensure that the goals of the agency are accomplished while allowing optimal flexibility for the individual. These signed contracts are placed in a central file which is accessible to all other members of the staff.

Attention to specific tasks is essential if the contract system is to function properly. Several blank lines are provided on the CPEF for the staff member to indicate the specific tasks which he/she proposes to accomplish. Without some

emphasis on the task to be accomplished, there is danger that the system will become as deceiving as the "credit hour" analysis has become to the academic world. In the latter case, the process has become confused with the outcome. Just as a student may lose sight of the true value of education in the struggle to amass the necessary number of credit hours for graduation, a counselor could lose sight of the true purpose of the contract system if accounting of hours becomes an end in itself. Therefore, it is imperative to attach tasks to the time invested. For example, a specific task in the Personal Development area might be to conduct two Communication Skills Workshops to service 24 students during a quarter; in the Consultation-Training area to train eight paraprofessional volunteers to specified skill level in empathy; and in the Research and Evaluation area to evaluate a new variation of the Career Development Group and publish it in the Student Development Series. The designation of specific tasks is the result of careful attention to step 4 in which agency activities are based on institutional needs as well as the individual interests and skills of staff members.

Step 9: Account for time and tasks recorded in individual contracts.

Steps 1 through 8 has prepared an agency as well as the individual staff members of the agency for periodic self-assessment and evaluation. This is completed by having all staff members, at the end of the specified period of time, meet with their supervisor or assigned colleague and assess their performance according to the objectives specified in their contracts. Individually, it provides a useful feedback mechanism for each staff member. Collectively, this process provides a feedback mechanism for the entire agency.

The CPEF (Figure 3) is also used in the process of evaluating how well each staff member has fulfilled the objectives of his/her contract. Each member completes a self-rating according to the four-point performance rating scale. These ratings are then multiplied by the weighted performance factors previously

assigned to each category. The resulting totals thus reflect the degree to which the objectives have been realized. These results are then shared with the supervisor or colleague for an objective check on the performance evaluation. Thus an objective, quantifiable measure of performance is obtained providing meaningful feedback for both the individual and the agency.

Step 10: Re-assess the system.

At the conclusion of each academic or fiscal year or at the end of some other specified period of time a long-term assessment occurs in which the entire staff meets together to assess the agency's intentional directionality and the effectiveness of past efforts. At this meeting it is essential to consider new or different feedback describing the needs of the institutional constituency served by the agency. Based on this input the proportions allocated to each intervention mode may be redistributed. In addition, the opportunity is provided at this meeting to assess the overall effectiveness of the staff in its team efforts. Essentially what occurs here is an evaluation of what has occurred in the past and a planning sequence for future efforts. This final step is seen as leading directly back into steps 1, 2, 3, or 4, depending on the needs and resources at that time.

Epilogue

It is the consensus of the professional staff in the University Counseling Center that this is one of the most creative and effective procedures to have emerged. It is really not the product of a small group of individuals sitting down to figure out how to best achieve agency intentional directionality. It is rather the product of trial and error over a five-year period. It is interesting to note that the initial efforts in this direction were the result of the agency's efforts to protect itself from becoming over-involved and over-committed in response to the demands being placed upon it. In the present age of "accountability" the

staff finds itself well prepared to answer questions and respond productively to administrative inquiries, as well as those of management systems experts. A basic ingredient prerequisite to the success of the system is a group of staff members who are not only committed to personal development, but also to being members of a larger team that recognizes and accepts a mission to be accomplished within the university or community.

Lest it be felt that this process suggests a "tyranny of time," it is the agreement by all staff members that an individual contract may be re-negotiated at any time. This is not an uncommon occurrence. Staff members, in fact, report a greater rather than lesser degree of self-determination and freedom. Commonly, appreciation and enthusiasm is expressed concerning the fact that each staff member is required to specify a clear and concrete statement of personal expectations and how that fits into the agency's goals and objectives.

This procedure then suggests a process by which agency intentional directionality may be developed without losing the great benefit of staff individuality.

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Figure I

PRIMARY VARIABLES

IN HIGHER EDUCATION

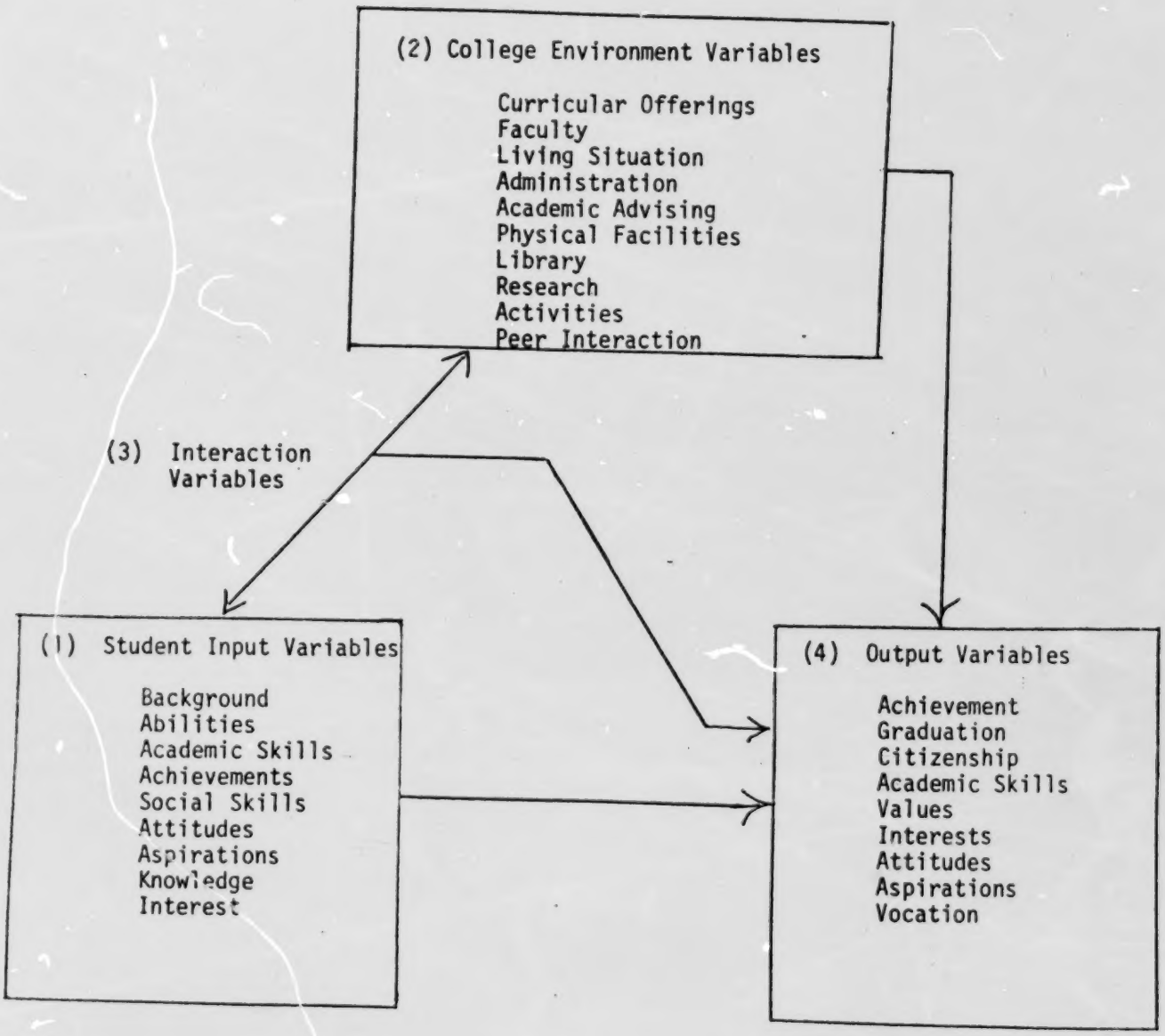

Figure 2

Date: Fall - 1974

TIME DISTRIBUTION CONTRACTS

Name	Personal Development	Consultation-Training	Staff Development	Research & Evaluation	Testing Service	General Administration	Professional Growth	Total Hours
Bevs	8	3	4	2	-	1	2	20
Bing	7	4	3	1	2	1	2	20
Ceen	12	-	3	1	-	2	2	20
Cain	7	2	4	13	-	2	3	31
Davis	23	3	3	-	-	3	4	36
Fogle	17	6	5	1	-	3	4	36
Gan	3	3	-	1	-	1	-	8
Hain	19	3	5	3	-	2	4	36
Hut	7	1	2	1	-	16	3	30
Kish	7	5	4	-	-	2	2	20
Mose	14	7	4	1	-	8	4	38
Moil	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	4
Naya	6	-	-	-	-	1	-	7
Peet	12	1	3	1	-	1	2	20
Petron	11	2	3	-	-	2	2	20
Pirk	23	-	2	1	-	2	3	31
Ridson	3	3	1	-	-	11	2	20
Ruez	18	12	3	-	-	3	4	40
Sheto	22	-	8	-	-	4	4	38
Toss	1	7	3	-	23	2	4	40
Weeg	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	4
Wilt	-	-	-	17	-	1	2	20
Waff	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	4
Yatze	13	8	2	2	-	4	3	32
Percent	41	12	12	8	4	13	10	100
TOTAL	236	70	68	48	25	72	56	575

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Figure 3

CONTRACT AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FORM

Performance Value Definitions

4

Consistently exceeds the criteria of a reasonable contract by offering outstanding leadership, by initiating new ideas or programs, or by consciously attending to the needs of students in a creative manner.

3

Frequently exceeds the criteria of a reasonable contract by being innovative and offering directionality to a program or service offered by the UCC.

2

Consistently meets the terms of a reasonable contract.

1

Occasionally does not meet the terms of a reasonable contract.

0

Consistently fails to meet the terms of a reasonable contract.

PERFORMANCE FACTORS	PERFORMANCE VALUES 4	3	2	1	0
____1. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT					
____A. Quantity of Work					
Implemented contracted number of programs					
Maintain accurate records on all clients					
Maintain contracted load of clients when required					
Maintain punctuality with all client contacts					
____B. Quality of Work					
Maintain therapeutic relationship with clients, participants					
Referrals are clear, appropriate, and thorough					
Final Summary notes are clear, concise, readable					
Treatment plans designed with 15 session guideline and eligibility status in mind					

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	PERFORMANCE VALUES 4	3	2	1	0
____2. CONSULTATION-TRAINING					
____A. Quantity					
Attended all required team meetings					
Accomplished specific tasks contracted for					
Maintained program at an operable level					
Kept accurate records of all training or consultative activities					
____B. Quality					
Developed and maintained good consultative relationships					
Reported results of consultation concisely and thoroughly					
Maintained a well conceptualized training plan					
____3. STAFF DEVELOPMENT					
____A. Quantity					
Punctually kept all supervisory and case conference meetings					
Attended in-service training programs					
Kept accurate, up-to-date supervisory records					
____B. Quality					
Maintained an appropriate consultive relationship with supervisor/supervisee					
Developed a plan for supervision to ensure that necessary material was covered					
Provided useful feedback to supervisor/supervisee					

	PERFORMANCE VALUES 4	3	2	1	0
____4. RESEARCH & EVALUATION					
____A. Quantity of Work Completed contracted tasks Attended R & E meetings					
____B. Quality Prepared well-written results of R & E task Devised appropriate research design, etc.					
____5. TESTING					
____A. Quantity of Work Spent required time in Testing Center Punctual					
____B. Quality Scored tests accurately Acquired knowledge about testing center, tests, and administration of tests					
____6. OTHER FACTORS					
____A. Professional growth					
____B. Administration					
____C. Professional Cooperation & Maintenance Good working relationship with UCC staff and other professionals					

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